

For the 2019 reporting period, no assessment has been made regarding Mexico's efforts to advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor because this is the first year that efforts have been assessed and suggested actions are included for Mexico. During the reporting period, the Government of Mexico made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas to combat the worst forms of child labor, including the ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, and the revision of the General Education Law to strengthen educational access for children from marginalized groups. The government also obtained convictions in 12 cases of child trafficking, established a new commission for the protection of migrant children, and drafted the Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor 2019–2024. Furthermore, the government carried out its 2019 National Child Labor Survey, and continued to fund and support a program that improved educational access for over 73,000 indigenous and Afro-descendant children. However, children in Mexico engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of chile peppers, coffee, sugarcane, and tomatoes. Although nearly 60 percent of employment occurs in the informal sector, federal and some state-level labor inspectors are only permitted to carry out inspections in the informal sector in response to complaints. In addition, a lack of human and financial resources limited the government's ability to adequately enforce labor and criminal law, and the government did not publish complete information on its labor and criminal law enforcement efforts. Furthermore, social programs to combat child labor do not address all relevant sectors of child labor in Mexico.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mexico engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. (1-7) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of chile peppers, coffee, sugarcane, and tomatoes. (8-11) The Child Labor Module (MTI) estimates that the population of children ages 5 to 17 years engaged in child labor fell from 3.5 million in 2007 to 2.1 million in 2017. This represents a decrease of 41 percent over 10 years, in part due to government policies and programs designed to combat child labor. (8,12) Current data show that 61 percent of child laborers engage in hazardous work and 40 percent of children who engage in unpaid work do not attend school. Child labor primarily occurs in the central and southern states of Nayarit, Zacatecas, Campeche, Tabasco, and Colima, and 73 percent of child laborers are boys. (8)

During the reporting period, the ILO assisted the National Institute of Geography and Statistics in carrying out the National Child Labor Survey (ENTI 2019), which will be used to develop policies and action plans to combat child labor based on the survey results. (13,14) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mexico.

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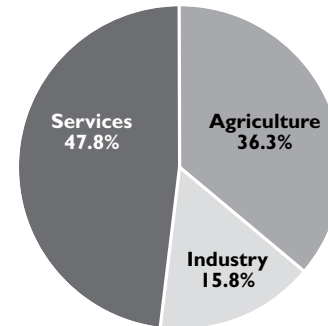
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.6 (801,890)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		104.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (15)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE), Módulo de Trabajo Infantil (MTI), 2017. (16)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Work in agriculture,† including in the production of avocados, chile peppers, coffee, cucumbers, eggplants, beans (green), melons, onions, sugarcane, tobacco,† and tomatoes (8-11,17-19) Cattle raising (8)
Industry	Manufacturing† footwear, furniture, garments, leather goods, and textiles (8,10,223) Producing baked goods (8) Construction,† activities unknown (8,10) Mining,† activities unknown (8) Working in woodworking and welding shops (8,10)
Services	Street work† as vendors, shoe shiners, beggars, car washers, and porters (9,20-22) Working in auto repair, beauty salons, restaurants, bars,† and coffee shops (8,10,22) Scavenging in landfills (9,23) Domestic work (8,24,25)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (26-29) Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,5,6,10) Use in illicit activities, including the production of poppies for heroin and drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2-4,7,30) Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (31-33)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children in Mexico are trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities, including by organized criminal groups. The state of Tlaxcala is known as the predominant source and transit center for child commercial sexual exploitation in Mexico, but it also occurs in tourist areas such as Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, and Cancun, and in northern border cities such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. (1-7) A report by the Regional Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and Girls in Latin America and the Caribbean (CATWLAC) found that 26 percent of female trafficking victims in Mexico are minors and 70 percent are of indigenous descent. (1-6,34,35)

Since 2006, the Government of Mexico has taken increased military action against drug cartels and organized criminal groups. Due to reports of violence and corruption, some state and municipal governments are unable to fully ensure the security of their population. (36-38) In response to the insecurity, some communities have formed self-defense militia groups. Reports indicate that one of these militias recruited and trained children as young as 6 years old to protect their community against organized criminal groups. (31-33) The group later agreed to disarm children after reaching an agreement with the Guerrero state government to increase police presence in the area. (39,40)

Child labor in agriculture is more prevalent among boys than girls. Although children engage in agricultural activities throughout the country, the majority of child labor in this sector occurs in the central and southern states of Nayarit, Campeche, Tabasco, and Colima. (8) Children's work in agriculture often includes long working hours, use of sharp tools, handling pesticides, and carrying heavy loads. (41,42) A 2016 study by UNICEF found that 44 percent of migrant agricultural worker households had at least one child engaged in child labor. (17,43,44)




Children from indigenous populations are more likely to work than non-indigenous children. (17,45-47) According to the National Committee on Human Rights, indigenous populations are especially vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking due to low educational levels, linguistic barriers, and discrimination, especially in the agricultural sector. (26,48-50) Indigenous children are also less likely to attend school due to the lack of schools near their homes, and the lack of educational materials and instruction in native languages. (45,47,51) In addition, some children ages 15 to 17 living in agricultural export-producing communities may be vulnerable to involvement in organized crime as they may not be able to find legal work. (52-55)

In 2019, Mexico hosted over 115,000 migrant children, mostly from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, who are fleeing violence and poverty. Approximately 40,500 of these children were unaccompanied minors. (56-59) Migrant children, especially those travelling by themselves, are more vulnerable to trafficking in persons, forced recruitment by organized criminal groups, and other worst forms of child labor. (2,60-62) The National Institute of Migration (INM) is responsible for enforcing the rights of migrant children and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) is tasked with refugee assistance. However, due to an increase in the number of migrants, including unaccompanied children, both INM and COMAR may have decreased funding to carry out their mandates. (59,63-77) In addition, many migrant children do not have access to education. Although Mexican law states that unaccompanied migrant children must be placed in child protection centers while waiting to be repatriated, many times they remain in detention centers without access to education. (58,60,63-65,77-79)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mexico has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 123 of the Constitution; Article 22 bis. of the Labor Code; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents; Article 6 of the General Law on Education (80-82)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 175 of the Labor Code (52)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 175–176 of the Labor Code (52)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1 and 5 of the Constitution; Articles 11, 12, and 22 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (80,81,83)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (81,83)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 202–205 of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 13 and 18 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (81,83,84)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 196 and 201 of the Federal Penal Code; Article 24 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 2, 4, and 5 of the Law on Organized Crime (84,85)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 5 of the Military Service Law (86)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 24 of the Military Service Law (86)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 123 and 201 of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 16 and 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (81,84)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Articles 6 and 129 of the General Law on Education (82)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3 of the Constitution (80)

‡ Age calculated based on available information

The Mexican Senate ratified the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) on June 19, 2019, and the subsequent Protocol of Amendment on December 12. The USMCA includes a labor chapter that brings labor obligations into the core of the agreement and makes them fully enforceable. (87-90) Under this chapter, Mexico commits to adopt and maintain in its statutes, regulations, and practices to effectively abolish child labor and prohibit the worst forms of child labor. The USMCA labor chapter also requires each country to prohibit the importation of goods into its territory from other sources produced in whole or in part by forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory child labor. (87,90)

Complimentary to the USMCA, in May 2019, Mexico also enacted historic labor reforms to strengthen worker rights, including regulating domestic work and requiring employers to develop and implement protocols to combat child labor and forced labor. (91-93) The government also revised the National Forfeiture Law, which enables the government to seize individual and company assets acquired illicitly, including through trafficking in persons. (93-95)

In 2019, the government revised the General Law on Education to strengthen educational access for indigenous, Afro-descendant, and migrant children, as well as children of migrant agricultural workers. The revised law requires educational authorities to provide learning materials in indigenous languages, develop programs to support indigenous and Afro-descendant children, and to improve education infrastructure in marginalized communities. (82) In addition, the revised law extended the period of time that children are required to attend school from pre-kindergarten through high school, which is usually completed by age 18. (82) As the minimum age for work at 15 years is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS)	Leads efforts to enforce child labor laws, conduct labor inspections, and refer cases for investigation. The Federal Prosecutor for the Defense of Work (PROFEDET), an independent entity under STPS, prosecutes cases in which workers' rights are violated, including cases with workers under age 18. (52,96-101) The federal-level STPS inspectorate is responsible for labor law enforcement in 22 industrial sectors, three types of enterprises, and labor matters affecting two or more states. The state-level STPS inspectorates are responsible for labor law enforcement in all other situations. (52,80,102) During the reporting period, the STPS underwent a restructuring to streamline operations, resulting in the establishment of the Unit on Dignified Work (UTD) to conduct labor inspections, including child labor inspections. In 2020, STPS will collaborate with USDOL on two projects to strengthen their capacity to enforce labor laws and train Mexican workers and unions on labor standards and identifying labor violations. (103-107)
Attorney General of the Republic (FGR)	Prosecutes crimes involving human trafficking, including criminal violations related to child trafficking and other worst forms of child labor. The Attorney General of the Republic's Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (FEVIMTRA) and the Specialized Unit on Trafficking in Minors, People, and Organs (UEITMPO) are responsible for investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases at the federal level. (2,101,108-111) In addition, 30 of the 31 states and the Federal District have specialized Trafficking in Persons (TIP) prosecutors or units which are responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking at the state level. Some state TIP units or prosecutors also prosecute cases of gender-based violence. (35,55,112,113) Federal and state TIP units receive some cases of child trafficking from the National Institute of Migration (INM) and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance. (63-68,77)
Conciliation and Arbitration Boards	Tripartite boards, which mediate and adjudicate labor disputes according to federal and state labor laws, including processing cases in which children between the ages of 15 and 18 request permission to work. Beginning in 2020, these boards will slowly be phased out and replaced by federal and state-level Labor Tribunals and Conciliation Centers. (52,80,91,114-116)
Secretariat of Health's National System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF)	Provides social assistance to child victims, including shelter and legal services. Employs representatives at the national, state, and municipal levels. (81,101,117) At the federal and state levels, also employs special prosecutors to carry out legal action against crimes related to children and adolescent rights, including violations related to the worst forms of child labor. (81,101,117) During school holidays, some state-level SNDIF ministries also conduct operations to monitor for child labor in the informal sector. (118-130)
National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH)	Independent ombudsman body. Receives complaints and conducts investigations on human rights violations, including cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (131)

Beginning in 2019, the Government of Mexico carried out a structural change known as the “Fourth Transformation,” which is designed to combat corruption and alleviate poverty. (132,133) Under this structural change, approximately 21,000 technical experts departed their positions due to significant budget cuts across many government agencies and programs. This situation left many secretariats and agencies without the appropriate personnel, expertise, and leadership to carry out core government functions, including establishing and implementing policies and programs related to the worst forms of child labor and enforcing related laws. (134-136)

Although the STPS inspectorates at the federal and state levels are responsible for carrying out child labor and occupational safety and health inspections in formally registered businesses, only state-level labor inspectorates have authority to conduct general labor conditions inspections in all commercial entities. (96,97,103) However, some Mexican states lack state-level labor inspectors. (55) In addition, while some state-level inspectorates can conduct unrestricted labor inspections in the informal sector, the federal-level and some state-level labor inspectorates can only conduct inspections in the informal sector in response to a complaint. As informal sector employment accounts for 57 percent of employment in Mexico, restrictions on conducting inspections in this sector leaves working children more vulnerable to labor law violations and crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. (10,93,96,98,103,137,138)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Mexico took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the STPS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human and financial resource allocation.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (96)	\$29,626,569 (139)
Number of Labor Inspectors	758 (140)	421 (101)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (96)	Yes (103)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (96)	N/A
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (96)	Unknown
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (96)	Unknown (141)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	111,075† (142)	35,981 (101)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (96)	35,981 (101)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (96)	648 (101)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (96)	Unknown (101)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (96)	Unknown (101)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (96)	Yes (143)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (96)	Yes (144)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (96)	Yes (101,143,144)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (96)	Unknown (143,144)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (96)	Yes (144)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (96)	Yes (144)

† Data are from January 1, 2018 to October 31, 2018.

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Mexico's workforce, which includes approximately 54 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Mexico would employ roughly 3,634 labor inspectors. (101,145-147) Although the government planned to hire and train 500 additional labor inspectors in 2019, restructuring of the STPS and austerity measures resulted in a reduction in the number of federal labor inspectors by almost 50 percent. (96,98,148)

The STPS initiates routine and targeted inspections based on analysis of compliance data and patterns of complaints. Unannounced inspections for child labor violations are only conducted in response to complaints and must be coordinated with representatives from the National System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF) and the local Office of the Attorney General (FGR). (97,103,144) The STPS reported carrying out inspections due to complaints of child labor in 2019, but the total number of complaints received or complaint-based inspections carried out is not known, as the STPS does not have an internal system to track cases of child labor violations. (101,103,144) Moreover, concerns remain with Mexico's lack of enforcement of laws governing the minimum age for employment in rural areas or at small and medium enterprises, particularly in the agricultural sector. (92,149,150) Although inspections were carried out by STPS at the federal level, research could not verify that all state-level STPS also conducted child labor inspections or sanctioned establishments in violation of the Labor Code. (118-122,124-126,151) It is also unclear whether the STPS at the federal and state levels apply the guidelines on identifying and sanctioning child labor violations as outlined in the "Labor Inspection Protocol to Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers". (97,101) The STPS and state-level labor ministries share enforcement authority of child labor laws, and are authorized to establish agreements for coordination of inspection duties. However, due to limited information sharing between federal and state-level inspectorates, some establishments may not be inspected for labor law violations. (96,144,152)

Even though federal labor inspectors have the authority to assess penalties for most labor infractions, child labor and forced labor infractions are considered criminal offenses. In such cases, inspectors are required to file a citation with the STPS's Directorate of Judicial Affairs to initiate sanctioning procedures with the state-level finance ministries or the FGR, who are then responsible for collecting fines or initiating criminal sanctions. (96,103,144)

Although children between the ages of 15 and 17 are required to obtain work permits, only the state of Jalisco reported issuing 1,917 permits in 2019. (118) Information on the issuance of work permits in other states was not provided for inclusion in this report.

In 2019, the STPS established a new reporting system, “*CumpliLab*,” to build a database of formally registered businesses and identify those in compliance with the Labor Code, including provisions related to child labor. (144,153) Registered businesses deemed to be in compliance will be exempt from labor inspections for one year and granted export certificates for their goods. (103,144,154)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mexico took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Training for Investigators	Yes (35)	Yes (93)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (35)	Unknown
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (35)	Yes (93)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (35)	31 (93)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (35)	Unknown (93)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (35)	31 (93)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (35)	4 (93)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (35)	Yes (93)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (35)	Yes (93,155)

The total number of investigations launched, prosecutions initiated, and convictions made related to the worst forms of child labor at the federal level is not known due to weak coordination and data sharing among government ministries. Research identified that inconsistent data collection and the lack of coordination amongst government ministries may hinder adequate criminal prosecution of employers and impact government efforts to provide victim services. (55,93) During the reporting period, Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (FEVIMTRA) collaborated with the governments of Colombia, Peru, the United States, and Venezuela in human trafficking investigations that resulted in at least four convictions. Federal authorities also launched 133 investigations, and FEVIMTRA reported assisting 21 minors during the year. (55,93,141) In addition, specialized Trafficking in Persons (TIP) units at the state level launched at least 545 trafficking in persons investigations and identified 658 victims during the reporting period. However, in both instances, it is unknown whether any of the victims were children. (55,93,113,141) The Federal District and the states of Chihuahua and Mexico were responsible for over half of the investigations conducted in 2019. Nevertheless, 14 other states opened fewer than five trafficking cases each. (113) Successful investigation and prosecution of human trafficking crimes varies by state, with the State of Mexico securing convictions in the highest percentage of cases. In 2019, the specialized prosecutor in the State of Mexico investigated and successfully prosecuted at least 12 cases of child trafficking for purposes of forced begging, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced domestic work. (35,93,113)

In 2019, FEVIMTRA provided refresher courses for 1,019 government officials, mainly law enforcement officials, on trafficking in persons investigations. Additionally, UNODC conducted workshops on trafficking in persons issues at the request of several state governments for government officials and NGOs. (93) Despite this, reports indicate that the lack of training for criminal law enforcement officers on how to perform judicial and police investigative functions, as well as confusion over territorial jurisdictions, has hampered the ability of criminal law enforcement officers to adequately investigate and prosecute cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (2,93) In addition, the insufficient capacity of judges and prosecutors to identify and investigate criminal

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cases related to human trafficking meant that many traffickers were prosecuted for more minor offenses or were acquitted. (2)

The National Trafficking in Persons Hotline, managed by the Citizens' Council for Safety and Justice of Mexico City, received 3,526 calls and referred 575 cases of human trafficking to FEVIMTRA, Specialized Unit on Trafficking in Minors, People, and Organs (UEITMPO), and state-level TIP prosecutors during the reporting period. (55,155) In 2019, FEVIMTRA and UEITMPO also assisted at least 617 victims of trafficking, of which 21 percent were children between the ages of 13 and 17. However, the total number of children referred and assisted in both cases is unknown. (93,141) As approximately 49 percent of FEVIMTRA's \$14,000 operating budget was used to provide shelter and other resources to trafficking victims as part of the investigation process, limited financial resources were available for investigations, training, and outreach. (141)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including funding.

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-ministerial Commission for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescents Workers of the Permitted Age in Mexico (CITI)	Coordinates Mexico's activities to develop policies, approve programs, and coordinate, monitor, and evaluate efforts to combat child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by STPS and includes representatives from the Secretariats of the Interior, Economy, Foreign Affairs, Wellbeing, Agriculture, Transportation, Education, Health, Tourism, Social Security, SINDIF, and FGR. (46,98) Meets on a quarterly basis and includes NGO networks, international technical and financial partners, such as UNODC and IOM, and bilateral partners, including the United States. In 2019, met on a regular basis to draft the new Plan of Action on Child Labor 2019–2024. (98,144,156)
Inter-ministerial Commission for the Prevention and Punishment of Human Trafficking Crimes	Coordinates efforts to address human trafficking in Mexico. Chaired by the Secretariat of the Interior and includes representatives from STPS, secretariats of numerous other government ministries, NGOs, and international technical and bilateral partners. (157,158) In 2019, developed and delivered trainings to government officials to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, with a focus on victim-centric approaches. (93)
National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA)	Guides national child protection policy and programs and coordinates child protection activities. Chaired by the Secretariat of the Interior and made up of a steering committee from multiple other ministries and representatives of civil society groups. (159) In 2019, carried out awareness-raising activities on children's rights, including prohibitions related to child labor; drafted a program to remove children from illicit activities, and established a Commission for the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children and Adolescents. (156,160-162) Research also identified many state-level SIPINNA that carried out awareness-raising activities against child labor. (119,120,122-124,127,128,130)
State Committees for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and for the Protection of Young Persons (CITI Estatales)	Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate activities related to the elimination of child labor through the 32 state and Federal District committees. These committees also compile, analyze, and report their activities to the federal CITI. (46,98) Although some state committees met on a regular basis during the reporting period, sources reported that the majority of state committees are either inactive or do not meet regularly. (55,101,120,122,123,144,156,163,164)
Commission for the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children and Adolescents*	Coordinates, develops, monitors, and evaluates strategies and programs to protect the rights of migrant and refugee children. Chaired by SIPINNA. (165-167) In 2019, developed a roadmap to protect migrant and refugee children and in collaboration with UNICEF, developed a protocol to address the needs of unaccompanied migrant children, including the provision of education, social services, and legal assistance. (63,64,168-170)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

Both government officials and civil society sources have stated that Mexico's federal budget allocates only 1 cent per child or \$267,000 to the CITI to implement programs and activities to prevent and combat child labor. Sources have reported this amount is insufficient to address the extent of the problem. (55,171-173)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Program for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (PRONAPINNA) (2020–2024)†	Promotes the rights of children and adolescents by increasing access to basic health and education and combating poverty and violence. (174)
National Development Plan (PND) (2019–2024)†	Aims to combat corruption, increase economic development, and promote social equality through environmental sustainability and access to quality education and health care services. During the reporting period, established <i>Jovenes Constuyendo el Futuro</i> and <i>Sembrando Vida</i> social programs. (175)
National Strategy for Inclusive Education (ENEI) (2019–2024)†	Supports inclusive education for vulnerable children, including migrant and indigenous children. (176,177)
Migrant Repatriation and Counter-Trafficking in Persons Accord Between Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua	Reinforces border security measures and repatriates victims of human trafficking, including unaccompanied children and young persons. (69,178,179) In 2019, 122 Infant Protection Agents from the National Migration Institute (INM) received training to assist unaccompanied migrant children. INM authorities also rescued and referred 423 child victims of trafficking to criminal law enforcement and social services agencies. (65,180)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In 2019, the government drafted the Plan of Action on Child Labor 2019–2024, National Plan on Human Rights 2019–2024, and the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons 2020–2024. However, these plans were not approved by the end of the reporting period. (101,141,181,182) In addition, although the government has established a National Development Plan, many government ministries have not developed, published, or implemented ministry-specific plans as required by the National Planning Law, including plans with components to prevent and eliminate child labor. (183-185)

In 2019, Mexico became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7. This involves accelerating commitments toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030, and the eradication of child labor by 2025. (186,187) The Government of Mexico created an action plan, which includes the goals of improving information generation on child and forced labor, strengthening coordination between the CITI and the Inter-ministerial Commission for the Prevention and Punishment of Human Trafficking Crimes, and establishing preventative actions to combat child and forced labor in supply chains. (188)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

The government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors and in all states.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Program for Inclusive and Equitable Education (PIEE)†	Nationwide Secretariat of Public Education program that offers primary, secondary, and high school-level education adapted for the unique needs of children of migrant farm workers. Formerly known as PRONIM, PIEE's national database tracks the educational progress of migrants to ensure they conclude their studies. (189) In 2019, PIEE had a budget of \$11 million, which included funds to provide basic primary education to children of migrant agricultural workers and strengthen educational services in indigenous communities and for vulnerable populations. (190,191)
Benito Juárez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program†	Secretariat of Public Education cash transfer program that offers two types of scholarships for families living in poverty and students at risk of school desertion. The Wellbeing Basic Education Family Scholarship provides bi-monthly payments of \$80 per household for all children under age 15 enrolled in school, while the Benito Juárez Scholarship provides bi-monthly payments of \$80 to each child enrolled in high school. (192-194) In 2019, assisted 10 million students, including 300,000 students of indigenous descent, Afro-descendant, or living in a marginalized community. (195,196) Although the program reaches a high number of students, it has been criticized for providing an insufficient cash transfer, lacking monitoring and evaluation, and having implementation issues. (197-202)
Support for Indigenous Education Program (PAEI)†	Implemented by the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI) to support educational access of children from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities through scholarships, boarding houses, and nutritional support. In 2019, assisted 73,886 children through the program's <i>Casas y Comedores de la Niñez Indígena</i> and <i>Casas y Comedores Comunitarios del Estudiante Indígena</i> . (203)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
Assistance for At-Risk Minors and Adolescents Program (PAMAR)†	Implemented by SNDIF at the state and municipal levels to assist youth at risk for child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, by providing shelters, psychosocial assistance, and training. Research found the program was active during the reporting period in a few states and municipalities, but it is not implemented across all states and municipalities where the program is needed. (204-207)
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL-funded projects that aim to eliminate child labor through research, increased labor inspection capacity, and expanded participation in education, training, and social protection programs. These projects include <i>Campos de Esperanza</i> , a \$10.5 million project implemented by World Vision in targeted agricultural communities in Oaxaca and Veracruz; and MAPI6, an ILO-implemented global project, with \$2.4 million dedicated to support the Mexican National Child Labor Survey (ENTI), which was carried out in 2019 with results to be released in 2020. (13,208,209) Additional projects include <i>Senderos*</i> , an \$8 million project implemented by Verité to combat child and forced labor in agricultural communities in Jalisco and Nayarit; <i>EQUAL*</i> , a \$5 million project implemented by World Vision to increase women's and adolescent girls' economic empowerment in the agricultural sector; and <i>COFFEE*</i> , a \$2 million project implemented by Verité in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico to develop tools for businesses to establish systems to prevent, detect, and combat child and forced labor in coffee supply chains. (210-212) For additional information, please visit our website.

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mexico.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (213-217)

During the reporting period, 47 anti-poverty programs were canceled, including the *Prospera* conditional cash transfer program, which required regular school attendance for families to receive the cash transfer, and the Program to Assist Migrant Agricultural Workers (PAJA), which had components to improve educational access for families of migrant workers. Both of these programs assisted vulnerable populations with children at risk of engaging in child labor. (55,218-221) However, new social programs were launched using a direct cash transfer model, including the Benito Juarez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program, which requires only that children enroll in school for families to receive the benefit. Sources have criticized the elimination of *Prospera*, though agree that more time is needed to evaluate the impact of the new scholarship program. (10,55,93,197,201,202,218)

In 2019, the government opened two migrant shelters operated by STPS and funded by the Ministry of Wellbeing—one in Baja California and one in Chihuahua. These shelters are intended to operate as “integration centers,” assisting foreign migrants in obtaining employment and providing social services, including educational access, for migrants and their children. (222)

In addition, many programs to prevent child labor, particularly in the agricultural sector, have been implemented as a result of improved private sector diligence rather than due to government efforts. (55)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mexico (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2019
Enforcement	Ensure the STPS at the federal and state levels conduct targeted and unannounced labor inspections in all sectors, including in the informal sector and in rural areas.	2019
	Publish information at the federal and state level on the number of child labor penalties imposed and collected, the number of inspections at worksites and unannounced inspections conducted, the number of criminal labor violations found, and disaggregate the number of prosecutions initiated and number of convictions secured by the number of cases involving children.	2019
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors in accordance with the ILO's technical advice to provide adequate coverage of the workforce.	2019

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Establish a case tracking system to ensure that violations of child labor laws are recorded and victims of child labor are referred to the appropriate services.	2019
	Train federal and state-level labor inspectors on the Labor Inspection Protocol to Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers and ensure its guidelines related to identifying and sanctioning child labor violations are followed.	2019
	Improve coordination and information sharing between federal and state-level labor inspectorates.	2019
	Increase coordination among government ministries to ensure adequate criminal prosecutions of perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor.	2019
	Increase training for enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges to ensure adequate criminal law enforcement related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies investigate and prosecute violations related to the worst forms of child labor, including cases of trafficking in persons.	2019
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies receive sufficient funding to conduct investigations and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019
Coordination	Ensure coordination mechanisms to combat child labor are adequately funded.	2019
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all the worst forms of child labor.	2019
	Ensure relevant government ministries develop, publish, and implement ministry-specific plans with components to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2019
Social Programs	Remove children from organized criminal groups and ensure they are provided with adequate social services.	2019
	Expand access to education by increasing school infrastructure, providing education materials and instruction in native languages, and ensure all children are able to attend school, including those in migrant or indigenous communities.	2019
	Ensure unaccompanied migrant children are placed in child protection centers instead of detention centers and receive access to education.	2019
	Ensure that the Benito Juárez Wellbeing Scholarship Program provides sufficient assistance to vulnerable students and receives regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective implementation.	2019
	Implement or expand social protection programs throughout the country for victims of child labor in all relevant sectors, including in commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities.	2019

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